DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 267 056 SP 027 374

AUTHOR Williams, David D.
TITLE Evolution of a Public School-University Partnership.
PUB DATE 28 Feb 86
NOTE 14p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (Chicago, IL, February 26-March 1, 1986).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS College School Cooperation; *Cooperative Programs; Higher Education; Preservice Teacher Education; Program Effectiveness; *School Districts
IDENTIFIERS *Brigham Young University UT

ABSTRACT

A consortium involving Brigham Young University (Utah) and five public school districts was formed in April 1984. The five common interests of the cooperating institutions were to: (1) improve educator preparation and inservice programs; (2) develop ways to make educational practice more congruent with research and theories about learners, the learning process, and teaching effectiveness; (3) explore the use of key schools; (4) develop strategies for attracting highly capable students into the education profession; and (5) coordinate research activities and program evaluation. Although the long term success of the consortium has not yet been evaluated, some progress has been made already. Task forces have been formed in the areas of administrator preparation, teacher preparation, gifted and talented, guidance and counseling, special education, foreign language, and research and evaluation, and projects are emerging from these task forces. (CB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED267056

Evolution of a public school-university partnership

David Williams
Brigham Young University

Presentation made at the annual meeting of the
American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education
in Chicago, Illinois
on February 28, 1986

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

D. Williams

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

SP 027 374

Evolution of a public school-university partnership

David Williams
Brigham Young University

As suggested by other presentations at this conference, schools and universities face some serious challenges. Goodlad(1986) mentioned this morning that there are several efforts being made throughout the country to address these problems by formally combining symbiotically the efforts of colleges and schools. This presentation summarizes some of the activities of such an effort in Utah.

The BYU-Public School Partnership

Through a variety of circumstances, a consortium involving Brigham Young University and five public school districts was formed in April 1984. A brief overview of historical relationships among these participating institutions, the national and local conditions leading to the cooperative alliance, the nature of the Partnership itself, a few of its accomplishments and some of its challenges provide a context for discussing potential research to be done on and through partnershipping.

Historical relationships. The relationships between the five participating school districts and Brigham Young University have been typical of most schools and universities in the United States--almost mutually exclusive. The five districts represent approximately one-third (100,000+) of the rapidly growing total

student enrollment in Utah and include one urban, three suburban and one rural districts. The districts are contiguous and adjoin the private university. BYU is the largest teacher education institution in Utah, preparing over one-half of all teachers graduated in Utah. College enrollment approximates 2,100 students with a faculty of 94. Although BYU has developed some prominence with its graduate program in Instructional Science, the focus of the faculty has been much greater on the preparation of teachers, counselors and principals than on research.

The five districts share much in common and the superintendents meet with others throughout Utah fairly regularly. But they had not made notable efforts to collaborate with one another on mutual concerns before the Partnership formed.

Inspite of an emphasis on preparation of school professionals, BYU has followed the convention of using the schools as settings for training their students without seriously cooperating with teachers and school administrators to define those experiences jointly so the mutual benefits could be more effectively reached. Also, except for a few exceptions, instead of joining the BYU faculty in joint research ventures, the schools have set policies which essentially prevent university faculty and students from overwhelming the schooling process with their requests to install student teachers and interns in buildings and to do research "on the schools and the students in them."

However, the relationships have not been antagonistic, perhaps because the BYU faculty have focused more on preparation of educators than on research; but neither have they been especially

beneficial. These five districts and university have essentially co-existed for many years; but recent developments in conditions have led to a change in the status quo.

National and local conditions. Since 1982, national, state and local public attention has focused heavily on public education and the preparation of educators. National reports from a variety of sources (e.g., Adler, 1982; Carnegie Foundation, n.d.; Goodlad, 1984; National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983; Sizer, 1983; Task Force on Education for Economic Growth, 1983; 20th Century Fund Task Force, 1983; Wirtz and LaPointe, 1982) have warned public school personnel and schools of education which prepare educators that they need to improve the system and the quality of education.

In Utah, which has one of the fastest growing public school student populations in the country (enrollments growing by 4-6% per year), the same public pressure has been mounting. The following recommendations from the Utah Education Reform Steering Committee's November 1983 report (Education in Utah: A Call to Action) are both representative and indicative of this public pressure. From page 17--

> The board of Regents, the State Board of Education, colleges and schools of education, and academic departments should reform their methods, procedures, and curriculum for educating teachers and administrators. Reforms should include increased cooperation and coordination with school districts in student teaching and in evaluation of prospective teachers. That cooperative relationship should extend to support the professional development of newly employed teachers. The academic preparation of teachers should be substantially improved, especially in subjects they will teach.

Other college and university departments should be more active partners with the departments of education in the preparation of teachers.

Practice teaching should be given heavier emphasis.

Locally, the pressure for improvement from national and state sources was reinforced by several well attended public meetings, and increased attention in the news. The central BYU administration specifically charged the College of Education to serve the public schools' interests more appropriately through research and the preparation of educators. Although BYU prepares more Utah educators than any other institution in the state, there was pressure to improve the quality of that preparation.

In response, the Dean of the College of Education initiated dialogue with the superintendents of some of the local school districts to discuss possible ways to respond to the many calls for reform. He also arranged to have Dr. John Goodlad fill a visiting scholars' chair at BYU to encourage the faculty and public school representatives to respond to the public outcry for change.

An outside catalyst. John Goodlad and his associates had recently published the findings of a series of studies of schooling in A Place Called School when he came to BYU as a visiting scholar. He met with BYU faculty in a variety of settings to discuss the status of teacher and administrator preparation programs in the college and requests from the central administration to increase scholarly productivity while focusing on ways to improve the public schools. He met with representatives of the public schools to discuss the needs for reform there and to ascertain some of their concerns about working with the BYU College of Education.

After several such discussions, Goodlad identified a set of common interests shared by the university and public schools which might serve as a basis for cooperation. In April 1984, he met jointly with the superintendents of the school districts and the deans of the college to outline those common interests and to propose a means of organizing to address these concerns together. As a result, the BYU-Public School Partnership was formed.

The Partnership. At that same meeting a very simple organization was agreed upon which has continued to function these two years. First, there was to be a Governing Board consisting of the Superintendents and Dean who would meet monthly as equal partners to identify and determine how to address common interests.

Second, others in the schools and university would contibute their perspectives by participating on task forces consisting of college faculty, school teachers and administrators from the member institutions assigned to work on specific challenges as requested via charges issued by the Governing Board. Projects could be initiated by faculty and administrators other than those on the Governing Board as well; but before receiving official endorsement of the Partnership, these activities would need the approval of the Board.

Third, an executive secretary was appointed to coordinate all the activities of these groups and serve other functions as they become defined. Some of these duties included representing the Partnership to outside agencies, facilitating communication within the Partnership as well as with other interested parties, encouraging research, evaluation, and development projects, seeking funding, and

documenting the evolution of the Partnership. The author has served as executive secretary for the past two years.

The five common interests of the cooperating institutions were stated as objectives or goals:

1) Improve educator preparation and inservice programs,
2) Develop ways to make educational practice more congruent with what is known about learners, the learning process and teaching effectiveness,
3) Explore the use of key schools,
4) Develop strategies for attracting highly capable students into the education profession, and
5) Coordinate research activities and the evaluation of programs in the member institutions so common interests are properly addressed.

During the first meeting of the Governing Board in April 1984, one of the Superintendents was elected to chair the Board and two task forces were initiated to begin addressing ways to improve the preparation of principals and the preparation of teachers. Discussion about funding, formal organization, yearly goals, operating procedures, and so on was postponed. The Board was anxious to get on with the common interests and wasted no time formalizing the organization.

Accomplishments. Although the longterm success of the Partnership in terms of its goals (the achievement of the common interests) remains to be seen, some progress has been made in two years. Perhaps too obvious to mention, yet, essential to the concept is the fact that the original institutions are all still interested in

continuing the collaboration. The Governing Board has continued to meet almost every month and function in spite of the transfer of one of the superintendents who served as the first chair and other administrative pressures. The college continues to provide one of its faculty to serve as the executive secretary as well as making other resources available. The idea is still very much alive.

Several task forces (administrator preparation, teacher preparation, gifted and talented, guidance and counseling, special education, foreign language diversification, and just recently a task force on research and evaluation consisting of the research directors from each of the districts and a BYU faculty member) have been formed and continue to function. Each institution provides representatives to these task forces who receive no extra compensation for their time or travel.

Research, evaluation, and program development projects are emerging from these task forces. For example, a new principal preparation program designed by the administrative task force in cooperation with BYU's department of educational leadership is being piloted this coming academic year. Currently students are being selected from among applicants from the five districts through a process which involves mentor principals from all the districts and BYU faculty. Students will spend a majority of their time in the schools with these mentor principals during the coming year.

Other task force products include a process for forming key or partner schools which is being developed by the teacher preparation task force for use in the teacher preparation program, organization by the research group of a series of research and evaluation projects

in areas of common interest for which the College is providing graduate interns to help district research directors, and Summer programs for gifted and talented students in languages, dance, drama and art of foreign cultures and in science, outdoor studies, museum projects and law.

Challenges. Of course, the participants in the Partnership have encountered a variety of challenges to their efforts to cooperate and make changes in the processes of education, the preparation of educators, and the conduct of research and evaluation of education. Several of these challenges, as well as the accomplishments will be discussed by the other participants in this symposium. However, some of them are outlined briefly here. Perhaps the most prevalent challenge from the beginning of the Partnership has been the need to develop confidence in all participants that others were truly committed to the idea. Although they continue to express enthusiasm and even excitement over the accomplishments of the various task forces, the members of the Governing Board are at times hesitant and cautious as they participate in a collaborative effort of which is there is little known.

For example, although they have advised their school boards of the Partnership as a concept, it has been a problem keeping them informed of all the development and activities of the task forces. Only infrequently do the superintendents propose agenda items for the monthly Governing Board meetings, choosing instead to react and respond to items proposed by the dean or the university faculty. This pattern suggests some uncertainty as to the likely outcomes of the Partnership as well as roles to be filled by Partner members.

From the dean's perspective, the university is seeking collaborative arrangements with the public schools so that the college of education will have exemplary settings in which to place student teachers. The dean hopes for collaborative arrangements with the public schools which will modify college programs for the preparation of teachers and administrators so they more clearly meet the needs of the public schools. But he worries too that university personnel may initiate too many of these efforts and wonders if the various partners are playing balanced and proper roles.

Related to these concerns is the challenge of developing a sense of collegiality among the members of the Partnership. Although participants on task forces have been cooperating quite well, it is obvious that school teachers and university faculty live in very different worlds and working as colleagues involves more patience and understanding of one another than anyone anticipated. The Dean and the Superintendents work well as peers; but many of the teachers and principals working with the university faculty took their degrees under these same persons and struggle to feel like true colleagues. A considerable amount of time has been spent by the members of task forces developing the sense of mutual trust and respect associated with collegial relationships. Much more will be spent.

Another challenge the Governing Board faces is deciding how much and what responsibilities to delegate to others. So far, there has been a general feeling of anxiety about people doing things in the name of the Partnership without review and approval of the Board.

Now, after two years, the Board has established a research group to screen research proposals and to propose evaluation of efforts. The Board has tended to want to review all proposals, but too much is going on for them to continue do so. Can the Board delegate? How and to whom should they delegate what responsibilities? It is not clear that the Partnership as an entity will be held responsible (or receive credit) for actions emanating from it. Rather, each superintendent and the dean feels personally liable as representatives of their participating institutions.

Unlike several other partnerships that are forming, Partnership members have not yet seen the need to discuss the matter of financial support for the Partnership. A small grant from the Utah State of Office of Education has provided sufficient support for initial efforts. The school districts have employed substitute teachers to replace school representatives who participate on task forces. And the university has provided faculty and graduate student time to support the Partnership. At some point in time, the Board members anticipate they will have to address the matter of financing the many other activities that are developing.

Although the informal organization has functioned thus far, the Governing Board has begun to discuss the need for more formal policies and job descriptions. For example, rather than assign the executive secretary to do whatever comes up, perhaps that position should have specific responsibilities which are clearly identified and publically announced. Likewise, policies on rights of affiliation and responsibilities of partners could be stated more explicitly. These issues have not demanded decisions yet; but as the Partnership

matures and tackles more and more problems, good answers to these and other concerns will be needed.

A continual problem is lack of communication. Even after two years, many people in the schools and university know very little about the Partnership and what they can do with it to help them improve. Brochures and newsletters may serve this function; but more detailed and active ways to inform and involve members of the participating organizations need to be explored.

The question of who to involve in the Partnership is also a concern. Some possibilites include other districts, the local technical college, local businesses, representatives of the public. At issue is the question of whether to stay small until we work out the bugs or to get others involved while we are struggling with some of the fundamental problems of starting.

Determining how to best initiate Partnership activities is another challenge. Balancing a trickle down of ideas from the Governing Board with the bubble up of proposals from the faculty in the schools and university is the concern. So far many of the issues have originated with the college representatives before they received consideration, modification and sponsorship of the Board. It is not clear that this process is the best.

Finally, there is the issue of how to best evaluate progress. Very little thought has been given so far to assessing how the Partnership generally as well as the individual programs and projects sponsored by the Partnership (like the administrative program) are doing.

References

Adler, M. J. (1982). Paideia Proposal. New York: McMillan.

Carnegie Foundation. (n. d.). High School-- a report on secondary education in America. Scranton: Keystone Industrial Park.

Goodlad, J. I. (1984). A place called school. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Goodlad, J. I. (1986). Elements of a vital teacher education program. Presentation at the annual meeting of the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education, Chicago, Illinois.

National Commission on Excellence in Education. (1983). A nation at risk: The imperative for educational reform. Washington: Government Printing Office.

Sizer, T. (1983). Horace's compromise: A dilemma of the American high schools. Palo Alto, Calif.: Houghton-Mifflin.

Task Force on Education for Economic Growth. (1983). Action for Excellence: A comprehensive plan to improve our nation's schools. Denver, Colo.: Education Commission.

20th Century Fund Task Force. (1983). Making the grade. New York: 20th Century Fund.

Utah Education Reform Steering Committee. (1983). Education in Utah: A call to action. Salt Lake City, Utah: State of Utah.

Washington: National Institute for Work and Learning.